

Every night thereafter the phoebe was looked for and always found. On two occasions, when the weather had turned decidedly cooler, the bird resorted to a niche in the wall a few inches above the nest; otherwise it was always in its favorite spot. Its habit of shyness when evening came was interesting; for the phoebe would never venture near the roost if any moving thing, whether horse or man, were visible within a hundred feet.

It is customary to think of protective coloration as applying only during daylight hours. Such, however, is not the case, for on occasions too numerous to recall the writer has attempted to find wild birds on their roosts by the aid of bright electric torches or gasoline lanterns, but never with success. This has been in spite of unusual opportunities for such a search, occasioned by the necessary inspection at night of long lines of mouse-traps set in the varying conditions of mountain, marsh and desert. And so the question of where birds spend the night will continue to run, answered only bit by bit, although each new answer will be interwoven with some tale of interest.

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NOTES ON THE RAILS

BY E. D. NAUMAN

These most peculiar and shy birds are so rare in this part of the state (Sigourney, Iowa), that during a period of fifteen years of careful observation of all our birds, only eight individuals belonging to four species of rails have come under my observation. So far as I know none of them breed here. If they do, I have never been fortunate enough to discover a nest.

The larger marshes and ponds in this vicinity have mostly been drained long ago and converted into cultivated fields. Consequently few nesting sites suitable for rails remain. Migratory birds as a rule return each summer to the locality where they were reared. It is also a fact that the life of most of our smaller birds is rather short. These facts account for the great scarcity or total absence of birds from localities where their nesting sites have all been destroyed.

Following is a list of the rails which it has been my opportunity to observe and an account of the circumstances under which they were seen.

On May 5, 1914, I was walking through a damp and marshy meadow when one of the little Black Rails raised up in front of my

feet, flew ahead a short distance then dropped into the grass again, and although I hunted and beat the grass about this spot for some time I was unable to flush or see it again.

On May 9, 1918, I found the dead body of a Sora Rail on the pavement directly under the line of some twenty-five electric wires, on one of our city streets. There had been a heavy wind, rain, and thunder storm the night before and this bird had no doubt become bewildered in flight, bumped into these wires and killed itself. On the 16th of the same month I saw another Sora daintily running along the edge of a small pond and disappearing in the grass.

On June 1, 1920, I saw a Virginia Rail running along the roadside near a small marsh and disappearing in the grass and weeds. Owing to the lateness of the date and the proximity of the marsh, this may have been one of a nesting pair, but I was unable to locate a nest or again to see the bird.

On April 16, 1921, we had one of those erratic Iowa snow storms which dressed the earth in a coat of white to a depth of about eight inches. We have a farm residence located about sixty rods from the river near here. At the date of which I write my daughter and her family were residing upon this farm. On arising in the early morning of the 17th and looking out of the window she beheld not only the great expanse of white, but to her great surprise a fine specimen of the King Rail which was walking about on the porch floor picking up a few stray crumbs and anything else that might help to sustain life for a cold and exceedingly hungry rail. The poor bird had no doubt been flying in the icy air until its wings refused to carry it any further and seeing this porch floor free from snow, it alighted there and began as best it could to satisfy its hunger.

On being disturbed of course it flew away, but my daughter supposing it would soon be back scattered some food on the floor. She was not disappointed for in a short time the bird was back and by the way it devoured the food it showed plainly that it was nearly starved. It also came back a number of times later to obtain a "hand out" at that back porch, until the snow went away so it could find food more to a rail's taste, after which it was not seen again. How the rails that did not find food and shelter during those awful days may have fared is not a pleasant matter to contemplate.

On April 14, 1921, and again on May 20, 1925, I saw single individual Soras. Both of these were feeding at the water's edge of West Creek. I watched the latter for fifteen minutes at close range. Part of the time it attempted to hide among the weeds or under drift wood,

but though I approached within ten feet it did not fly. After eyeing me curiously for a few minutes it went on hunting for food again.

On October 1, 1925, while walking over a blue grass pasture, I came to a ditch or washout ten feet or more in depth. Chunks of sod had slid down the sides of this ditch more or less of the way so as to give it a terraced appearance. In crossing this ditch I was stepping and hopping from one of these sod patches to the other when suddenly one of the little Black Rails flew from under my very feet. It dropped down again just as suddenly about fifteen feet from me and attempted to hide about one of those grass patches. I approached cautiously to get a good view, but since it met with little success in hiding, it soon flew out of the ditch and disappeared.

SIGOURNEY, IOWA.

AUXILIARY GUN BARRELS FOR COLLECTING BIRD SPECIMENS

BY W. G. F.

As time elapses and the older generation of ornithologists and collectors of bird specimens pass on, or become inactive, it happens that many of the younger men taking their places in the ranks of bird students are but little acquainted with the art of preparing scientific skins or the proper equipment for shooting the birds.

The writer in his later years having recognized the importance of, occasionally at least, collecting and preserving specimens of birds has experimented with a variety of gun calibers, different barrel lengths and especially, various types of small caliber auxiliary barrels. Therefore in the present paper it is proposed to describe and discuss some simple and easily made types of auxiliary barrels suited for use in 12-16-20-, or even smaller, gauge shot guns, together with suitable ammunition therefor.

By the use of such small caliber barrels or bushings temporarily inserted in the chambers of ordinary shot guns, small birds may be collected at distances of twenty to sixty feet without mutilation. Less noise is made and particularly the bulk, weight, and cost of the ammunition are less. Lessened weight and bulk are important when one goes into the field prepared to shoot anything from hummers to eagles! The writer believes in "preparedness" although he never has shot either a hummer or an eagle.

After experimenting with guns shooting shot shells, from smooth bore .22s and .32s to a 12-gauge long range gun chambering 3 inch shells I recommend for ordinary collecting purposes, a 16-gauge, 28 inch or